

# The Threat of Subjective Religion! Salvation Based upon Feelings

## Introduction

- I. For the past several years we have been observing the growing practice of Subjective Religion."
- II. This religion consists of the exaltation of the inner feelings, emotions, fantasies, experiences, and even hallucinations.
  - A. Such has led some to lay aside the Bible, and to rest their salvation upon delusions that have been conjured up by a fertile imagination.
- III. "Subjectivism", as defined by Webster's Dictionary, means:
  - A. "A doctrine that individual feeling or apprehension is the ultimate criterion of the good or the right. A doctrine that the supreme good is a subjective experience or feeling (as pleasure)".
    - 1) Since this is true, "subjective religion" opposes objective faith in God, Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.
    - 2) Revelation from God is ignored in the quest for the inner feelings and personal experiences.
      - a. One person expressed it this way, as he thumped his chest:
        - 1) "I'd rather have what I've got in here than all the Bibles you could stack before me."
        - 2) Such a statement as this is neither rational nor right.
        - 3) But, such is the fruit of "Subjective

Religion."

## Body

### I. Subjective Religion Relies On One's Feelings.

- A. Many people are in religious error because they have allowed their feelings to be their guide, and their feelings are based upon religious teaching which is not in harmony with the Word of God.
1. One can feel just as spiritually secure in error as in truth.
  2. Prior to becoming a Christian, Paul was a devout Pharisee.
    - a. He described himself as one who was "...taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God..." (Acts 22:3).
    - b. He had lived in all good conscience before God (Acts 23:1).
    - c. Paul felt spiritually secure.
      - 1) He felt that he was right, but he was wrong.
      - 2) Had Paul been determined to "walk by feelings," he would never have renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity.
- B. Personal feelings, inward emotions and personal experiences cannot be true guides.
1. Yet, it is upon these that 'subjective religion' is based and thrives.
  2. Such people seek a "*personal relationship with Jesus*", but ignore the Bible which tells all that we can know of Him.
  3. They claim that they seek to "really know

God," but at the same time they turn from the Scriptures wherein God has revealed Himself to men.

4. They seek for some "*working of the Spirit within*," while they reject the revelation the Spirit has delivered through inspired men.

- a. Peter says: "Know this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Pet. 1:20,21.

5. So, it is that those who passionately seek to find God in their own way have ignored those means God has ordained for them.

- a. Paul says: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient." Rom. 1:28.

- 1) So, we find that "subjective religion" is selfish and ingrown.

## II. SUBJECTIVE RELIGION Vs. Objective Faith.

A. "*Subjective religion*" is founded on inner feelings and personal experiences, whereas "*objective faith*" relies upon what God has said.

1. Man should know that he cannot rely upon himself.

- a. Solomon said: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 14:12.

- b. Jeremiah said: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his

steps." Jer. 10:23.

2. Nowhere is the foolishness of man more evident than when he seeks to rely on himself.

Prov. 3:5 - **Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.**

- B. "Objective faith" is obtained by listening to God, and heeding His counsel.

1. Paul said: **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** Rom. 10:17.

- C. "Objective faith" believes God and is thus motivated to obey Him.

1. **"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God."** Jas. 2:23.
2. Note the motivation of his faith: **"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place he should after receive for an inheritance, OBEYED; and he went out not knowing whither he went."** Heb. 11:8.
  - a. So, saving faith accepts the word of God, and moves in obedience to obtain the promised reward.

### **III. Feelings And Experiences Are Unreliable.**

- A. It is possible to feel that you are right, and yet be wrong.
- B. It is possible to be honest, yet be honestly mistaken.
- C. It is possible to be religious, yet be in religious error.
- D. It is possible to be conscientious, yet be conscientiously misguided.
- E. Have you ever stopped to think that Paul was an example for our learning?
  1. He stated of himself: **"I verily though with**

myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them."

Acts 26:9,10.

- a. How did he feel? Was he sincere? Was he honest? Was he religious? Was he conscientious?

1) Hear him: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

Acts 23:1.

- b. Was he justified in this?

1) Listen to him: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. 1:15.

2. By all standards of "subjective religion" Paul stood tall -- but Paul was lost and undone.

- D. Feelings are often produced by the acceptance and belief of testimony.

1. For example, a man receives a message stating that a loved one has just been killed in an automobile accident.
  - a. He is immediately overwhelmed with grief.
  - b. A short time later, he receives another message informing him that a terrible mistake had been made: the previous message was in error, and his loved one is alive and well.
    - 1) Immediately his feelings undergo a dramatic transformation.
    - 2) He is filled with joy.
2. One's feelings respond in direct relation to the nature of the information or testimony

received.

- a. If one receives a sad message and believes it, he will be sad, regardless of whether the message is true or false.
- b. This is why feelings are so unreliable, both in everyday life and in religious matters.

#### IV. Emotional Experiences Will Not Save.

A. "Subjective religion" thrives on mass hysteria.

1. Cell meetings where the Spirit works, vaunted claims of tongues and healings by God's special anointed ones.
  - a. Such people plead for that "second blessing of the Spirit."
  - b. But the same people would think someone fanatic if he quoted what Ananias said to Saul.
    - 1) "And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16.
    - 2) They prefer emotion rather than gospel.

B. I suppose that subjective religion could have had a field day on Pentecost.

1. They had the visible manifestation of the Spirit, a mysterious audible sound, apostles speaking in tongues so that every man heard in his own language, and a multitude was amazed and marveled.
2. But what did Peter do? He preached Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead.
  - a. When asked what to do, he plainly told them:
    - 1) "Repent, and be baptized, every

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ  
for the remission of sins, and ye shall  
receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
Acts 2:38.

- 2) There was no emotional shock  
treatment; no stupefying miracle;  
no theatricals, but a simple  
statement of the terms of salvation.
  - a) And it got the job done, 3000  
souls were added to the Lord that day.

## V. Subjectivism Is Used To Bolster Ones Faith.

- A. There are frenzied and frantic efforts to call  
forth the Spirit to work in the heart of the  
sinner; or to give a "second blessing" to one  
already saved.
- B. How often they plead and implore for the  
Holy Spirit's converting power to enter a  
sinner's heart!
  1. But they ignore the word which says:  
"The word of the Lord is perfect,  
converting the soul." Psa. 19:7.
- C. There are those that claim that they need a  
*sign* from the Lord. To such, God says:
  1. "A wicked and adulterous generation  
seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no  
sign given unto it." Matt. 16:4.
- D. The rich man in Hades asked that a sign be  
given to his brethren in the world. He said:
  1. "If one went unto them from the dead,  
they will repent."
  2. But the reply of the Lord was: "If they  
hear not Moses and the prophets, neither  
will they be persuaded, though one arose  
from the dead." Lk. 16:27-31.

E. WE do not need further miracles in order to believe and be saved.

1. We need faith in the authority and finality of God's Word.
2. Note the purpose of miracles as recorded in: Jno. 20:30, 31 - **And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.**
  - a. One who is not willing to accept this divine revelation, and believe in Christ because of these signs, will surely not find salvation by looking to inner feelings, emotions, etc.

VI. How tragic that one would allow something as important as salvation to be based upon mere feeling.

- A. In no other area of life does one allow feeling to be the basic criterion for determining the rightness or wrongness of a particular thing or course of action.
- B. One does not bake a cake by "feeling."
  1. Instead, a recipe is consulted in order that one might know the proper ingredients to use, the correct amount of each ingredient, and the proper temperature at which to bake.
- C. A contractor would never attempt to build a house by "feeling."
  1. Rather, he consults a blueprint in order that he might know exactly how the house should be constructed.

- D. One would not think of taking a cross-country trip by "feeling."
1. Instead, a road map is consulted so as to know the exact route to take, when to turn right, left, etc.
- E. Furthermore, in baking a cake, one would not argue for the use of fifteen additional ingredients on the basis of the failure of the recipe to specify that such ingredients were not to be used.
1. If a blueprint calls for three bedrooms, a wise contractor would obviously not act so presumptuously as to add a fourth bedroom and then attempt to justify his actions by saying, "But the blueprint doesn't say not to."
- F. A traveler desiring to reach a certain destination does not feel at liberty to go in just any direction on the basis of the road map's failure to eliminate such routes with a "Thou shalt not..."
- G. Many people seem unable or unwilling to apply this same logic to religion.
1. We are commanded to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).
  2. God's Word is the only source of faith (Romans 10:17).
    - a. Thus, to **walk by faith** is to walk according to the teachings of the Word of God.
    - b. It is not possible to engage in an act "by faith" if that act is not authorized by the Word of God.
    - c. God's Word is a divine recipe, blueprint, or road map.

- G. One cannot know he is saved simply because "feels" saved.
1. One cannot know that his worship is acceptable to God simply because he "feels" that it is.
  2. Neither is it possible to know that one is on the road to Heaven merely on the basis of feeling.
    - a. God's Word, which is our blueprint or road map, must be consulted.
    - b. As Moses was careful to follow the divine pattern for the construction of the physical tabernacle (Ex 25:40), even so **must we exercise diligence** in following God's divine pattern for the construction of our spiritual lives.

## Conclusion

- I. The weakness of "Subjective Religion" is that the plain terms of salvation become obscured in a vain quest for that which is hazy, fuzzy, and not clearly set forth.
- II. God desires that all be saved, 2 Pet. 3:9, and He has therefore set forth His requirements in no uncertain terms.
- III. Let us not depend upon a "subjective religion", that which we feel from within, but let us be objective, accepting and obeying the will of God as it is written in the New Testament.
- IV. Are you walking by faith or by feeling?
  - A. Remember, the untaught heart is **"...deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."** (Jeremiah 17:9).
  - B. Solomon affirmed, **"He that trusted**

in his own heart is a fool..."  
(Proverbs 28:26).

- C. Place your trust in God and His Word,  
not in the fickle nature of human feelings.

Invitation:

- A. Paul was not told to trust in his feelings.
  - 1. Rather, the record indicates his feelings had proven to be misleading.
  - 2. He was at the place where he had been told to be where he would receive answer to his question, "what must I do?"
    - a. He was told "Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).
    - b. Do you need to do the same?

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Sermon Developed from lessons by J Sassar and Karl Hunt